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STUDY S-467

THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. STRATEGIC COMMAND AND CONTROL AND WARNING, 1945-1972 (U)

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thorough reviews of US strategic capabilities, generally and in the NATO alliance, were promulgated.

(U) (S) The 1967 general exercise to test the whole spectrum of command in a strategic crisis (HIGH HEELS 67) had revealed serious weaknesses and deficiencies in command and control. Numerous assessments of our strategic command and control system were also made in the period under review here. In early 1969, for example, a Draft Presidential Memorandum stated that the strategic retaliatory forces had some weaknesses, but these were not so significant as the weaknesses in our control for flexible responses to less than all-out attacks The major problems were considered to be maintaining our capability to respond to full-scale attacks and ensuring the survival of the National Command Authorities. "We have enough numbers and types of weapons to respond selectively to limited nuclear attacks," the DPM stated, "but we lack the planning and command and control capability needed to use our weapons in this manner."[6]

(U) (S) Extensive discussions were held within the defense community about the command and control requirements for the emerging strategic environment. There was general agreement on a basic requirement for a planning and command and control capability that would provide a credible deterrent to limited strategic attack and enable the United States to launch such an attack. The Deputy Secretary of Defense appraised the situation in mid-1969 this way: "We need to place greater emphasis on improving our command, control, decision making, and other war-fighting capabilities so that our options in time of crisis or war are not restricted to large, pre-planned responses."[7]

(U) (S) An assumption that was gaining increasing currency was the idea that in a limited nuclear exchange the command centers on both sides would be spared.[8] This assumption implied a survivable NCA and command and control center that

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would enable the NCA to (1) launch selective and flexible attacks, (2) know which US targets had been attacked and the extent of the damage, (3) negotiate termination of war, (4) compensate for planning uncertainties, (5) continue to control residual and reconstituted forces, (6) deal with third countries, (7) employ more forces with greater discrimination and efficiency, and (8) diminish risks of escalation.

(U) (~~TS~~) Various JCS-WSEG analyses at this time also pointed up the need for specific capabilities:

> (1) More flexibility than is available in the SIOP today.
>
> (2) Inclusion at NMCC levels of capabilities currently associated with JSTPS (Joint Strategic Targets Planning Staff) activities.
>
> (3) Concept for JCS to send all SIOP execution orders directly to SIOP forces.

WSEG Report 129 also talked of a "nuclear exchange management capability," of "option selection," "strike monitoring," and "replanning," command and control functions outside the traditional pattern.[9]

(U) (~~TS~~) The "Response to NSSM 64," delivered in late 1969, reflected the knowledge and the expertise of all the relevant parts of the defense community. The report's gloomy tone on the subject of the US capability to maintain command and control of its forces in a limited strategic war posed basic doctrinal questions for US command and control. (The focus on command and control reflected the charge given to the reporting departments and agencies and the importance they assigned to the matter.) The burden of the report was that the United States possessed a good capability to execute a preplanned attack, but "Command Centers do not possess the combination of survivability and capability which is required for the conduct of limited strategic nuclear war. Those which are survivable have limited capability; those with the required capability are not survivable."[10] (The point, in short,

was that the NMCC and ANMCC lacked survivability and the NEACP had limited capability.)

(U) (~~S~~) The conclusion was the same in other assessments of the command and control system. The "Response to NSSM 65," which was concerned with strategic capabilities within the NATO alliance, was even less reassuring than the report produced for NSSM 64.[11] The "Response to NSSM 65" quoted WSEG Reports 108 and 110 to the effect that our command and control systems could not support command decisions.[12]

(U) (~~S~~) In February 1971, WSEG-IDA Report 159 summed up the problem in these words:

> It seems to be accepted universally that the existing DoD C&C system was not structured to accommodate limited strategic nuclear operations and that capabilities in this area are extremely poor. At the same time, however, and for reasons which are not clear, there seems to be traditional acceptance of the position that the C&C system has an adequate capability to provide whatever support is needed in order to enable the President to decide how and when to execute the SIOP. It is concluded in this study that there is no basis for such a position. A more accurate appraisal would seem to be that our warning assessment, attack assessment, and damage assessment capabilities are so limited that the President may well have to make SIOP execution decisions virtually in the blind, at least so far as real time information is concerned. This situation will become even more acute if the Soviets continue to modify their force structure so as to increase their overall capability to launch a "zero" warning attack on the US and also to attrit our forces if we do not respond rapidly.[13]

(U) (~~S~~) The Assistant Secretary (Systems Analysis) suggested that the lead time involved in acquiring new equipment and systems to provide a strategic flexible response capability would not result in any improvement in our capability to respond with strategic nuclear weapons at less than SIOP levels until 1975-76. In view of the lead time involved in making